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From the Office of the Director of Health

Common-sense Hygiene Prevents MRSA and Other Skin Infections

The skin infection methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) can be prevented with common-sense hygiene. The Springfield-Greene County Health Department encourages residents to remember that despite recent media attention, the majority of MRSA infections are minor and can be treated by having a physician drain the wound, and in some cases, by taking antibiotics. In addition, residents can protect themselves from MRSA infection by practicing good hygiene.

"We've got to get back to the basics of disease prevention," says director of health Kevin Gipson. "Washing your hands is one of the most effective interventions against MRSA. There is no need to disinfect an entire building. That is not how MRSA spreads. It takes close skin-to-skin contact with someone who has MRSA, contact with an open, uncovered wound or contaminated bandage, or sharing personal items such as a towel or a razor that is contaminated with MRSA bacteria."

The best protection against MRSA is to wash hands frequently with soap and water, keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered, avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages and avoid sharing personal items such as towels and razors.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) say a small number of U.S. children get serious MRSA each year, but the vast majority are treated successfully. Parents should wash and bandage cuts and consult a health care provider if a wound spreads or looks infected.

Schools and day care centers should maintain a clean environment by continuing cleaning procedures for frequently touched surfaces and surfaces that come into direct contact with people's skin. They should also ensure skin breaks are covered with a clean, dry bandage and should remind children and employees to wash their hands frequently with soap and water.

More information can be found on the health department's Web site at <http://health.springfieldmogov.org>.

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